

VEGA family

Continued from page A6

is a five-time Bulgarian National champion and an Olympic bronze medallist. [Hancock] has an extensive collegiate coaching background.

"Combining forces allows these two to concentrate on coaching, which is what they do best, while we focus on running the business end of things," Parra added. "There are plenty of kids to go around. Joining up made the most sense. We can provide a better service to kids because of the strength of the partnership."

VEGA is expanding to two gyms. It will continue to operate at its current location

in Camas, which will now be called VEGA Camas. A grand opening ceremony for the new VEGA North site is Saturday, starting at 2 p.m.

The Vancouver area facility offers 15,000 square feet of space in the main gym, and a smaller gym next door. Parra and company have plans to a build new 17,000 square foot complex. In the meantime, the two facilities will allow VEGA to accommodate more than 3,000 athletes.

The partnership brings Stoianov back to his roots. He was instrumental in founding and building up Gold Star Gymnastics in mid 1990s, before branching out to VEGA.

"It's exciting to step back

on the same ground with other good people to coach with," Stoianov said.

Stoianov gets a kick out of seeing the young kids he coaches maturing into competitive gymnasts and even coaches themselves. The merging of Big Air into VEGA should give him more opportunities to spread his passion.

"The kids are excited to make new friends," Stoianov said. "The thrill of doing this together is exciting for all of us."

After coaching gymnasts and running a gym of his own, Hancock said he has finally found his purpose.

"After 23 years of coaching, I finally feel like I am in the

place I need to be," he said. "I started coaching when I was 15. I am a lifer."

Parra's recipe for success is finding people who commit their lives to helping kids.

"We are grateful to have so many lifers dedicating their time and effort to gymnastics and dance," he said. "That's why our programs are so successful."

"I guess I am one, too," Stoianov said. "I've been coaching for about 26 years. I competed until I was 24."

"If you combine all of our years, it's like a century of coaching," he added.

"Call us centurions," Hancock said.